

### Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the above-identified application:

#### Listing of Claims

**Claim 1** (Currently amended): An order-acceptance management apparatus for assigning a rank to an orderer and implementing acceptance of an order for a commodity in accordance with the rank, comprising:

inventory acquisition means for acquiring information concerning number of units of a commodity in stock from storage means in which number of units of the commodity in stock has been stored upon being allocated to a group corresponding to the rank; and

determination means for determining whether an order can be accepted if the order has been issued;

wherein said determination means determines, ~~on the basis of the information concerning the number of units in stock acquired by said inventory acquisition means, whether the commodity that belongs to the group corresponding to the rank assigned to the orderer and that is capable of satisfying the order issued is in stock, and determines that the issued order is capable of being accepted if it is determined that the commodity is in stock that~~ the issued order is accepted and the number of units of a commodity in stock stored in the storage means is replaced with a number that is difference value between the number of units of a commodity in stock and the number of the issued order if the number of commodity that belongs to a first group corresponding to a first rank assigned to the orderer is not less than the number of issued order, and

said determination means determines that the issued order is not accepted and determines whether the commodity that belongs to a second group corresponding to a second rank lower than the first rank is in stock without acceptance of an order of the first group if the number of commodity that belongs to the first group corresponding to the first rank assigned to the orderer is less than the number of issued order.

**Claim 2 (Canceled)**

**Claim 3 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising allocation decision means for deciding allocation of number of units of the commodity in stock on a per-group basis.

**Claim 4 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising dealings-performance acquisition means for acquiring information concerning dealings performance from storage means in which dealings performance on a per-rank basis has been stored;

wherein said allocation decision means decides the allocation based upon the information concerning dealings performance acquired by said dealings-performance acquisition means.

**Claim 5 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

delivery-schedule acquisition means for acquiring information concerning a delivery schedule of a commodity from storage means in which the delivery schedule has been stored; and

means for deciding a delivery date of a commodity for which an order has been accepted based upon the information concerning the delivery schedule acquired by said delivery-schedule acquisition means.

**Claim 6 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said apparatus is connected via a communication channel to a computer that issues the order.

**Claim 7 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising means for notifying the computer of whether the issued order will be accepted or not based upon the determination made by said determination means.

**Claim 8 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising:

delivery-schedule acquisition means for acquiring information concerning a delivery schedule of a commodity from storage means in which the delivery schedule has been stored;

means for deciding a delivery date of a commodity for which an order has been accepted based upon the information concerning the delivery schedule acquired by said delivery-schedule acquisition means; and

means for notifying the computer of the delivery date that has been decided.

**Claim 9 (Original):** The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a computer connected to said apparatus is provided with the storage means.

**Claim 10 (Currently amended):** An order-acceptance management method for assigning a rank to an orderer and implementing acceptance of an order for a commodity in accordance with the rank, comprising:

an inventory acquisition step of acquiring information concerning number of units of a commodity in stock from storage means in which number of units of the commodity in stock has been stored upon being allocated to a group corresponding to the rank; and

a determination step of determining whether an order can be accepted if the order has been issued;

wherein said determination step determines, ~~on the basis of the information concerning the number of units in stock acquired at said inventory acquisition step, whether the commodity that belongs to the group corresponding to the rank assigned to the orderer and that is capable of satisfying the order issued is in stock, and determines that the issued order is capable of being accepted if it is determined that the commodity is in stock that the issued order is accepted and the number of units of a commodity in stock stored in the storage means is replaced with a number that is difference value between the number of units of a commodity in stock and the number of the issued order if the number of commodity that belongs to a first group corresponding to a first rank assigned to the orderer is not less than the number of issued order, and~~

said determination step determines that the issued order is not accepted and determines whether the commodity that belongs to a second group corresponding to a second rank lower than the first rank is in stock without acceptance of an order of the first group if the number of commodity that belongs to the first group corresponding to the first rank assigned to the orderer is less than the number of issued order.

**Claim 11 (Canceled)**

**Claim 12 (Original):** The method according to claim 10, further comprising an allocation decision step of deciding allocation of number of units of the commodity in stock on a per-group basis.

**Claim 13 (Original):** The method according to claim 12, further comprising a dealings-performance acquisition step of acquiring information concerning dealings performance from storage means in which dealings performance on a per-rank basis has been stored;

wherein said allocation decision step decides the allocation based upon the information concerning dealings performance acquired at said dealings-performance acquisition step.

**Claim 14 (Original):** The method according to claim 10, further comprising:

a delivery-schedule acquisition step of acquiring information concerning a delivery schedule of a commodity from storage means in which the delivery schedule has been stored; and

a step of deciding a delivery date of a commodity for which an order has been accepted based upon the information concerning the delivery schedule acquired at said delivery-schedule acquisition step.

**Claim 15 (Currently amended):** A storage medium on which has been recorded a program for causing a computer to function as the following means in order to assign a rank to an orderer and implement acceptance of an order for a commodity in accordance with the rank:

inventory acquisition means for acquiring information concerning number of units of a commodity in stock from storage means in which number of units of the commodity in stock has been stored upon being allocated to a group corresponding to the rank; and

determination means for determining whether an order can be accepted if the order has been issued;

wherein said determination means determines, ~~on the basis of the information concerning the number of units in stock acquired by said inventory acquisition means, whether the commodity that belongs to the group corresponding to the rank assigned to the orderer and that is capable of satisfying the order issued is in stock, and determines that the issued order is capable of being accepted if it is determined that the commodity is in stock~~ that

the issued order is accepted and the number of units of a commodity in stock stored in the storage means is replaced with a number that is difference value between the number of units of a commodity in stock and the number of the issued order if the number of commodity that belongs to a first group corresponding to a first rank assigned to the orderer is not less than the number of issued order, and

said determination step determines that the issued order is not accepted and determines whether the commodity that belongs to a second group corresponding to a second rank lower than the first rank is in stock without acceptance of an order of the first group if the number of commodity that belongs to the first group corresponding to the first rank assigned to the orderer is less than the number of issued order.

**Claim 16** (Canceled)

**Claim 17** (Original): The storage medium according to claim 15, wherein said program includes a program for causing the computer to function as allocation decision means for deciding allocation of number of units of the commodity in stock on a per-group basis.

**Claim 18** (Original): The storage medium according to claim 17, wherein said program includes a program for causing the computer to function as dealings-performance acquisition means for acquiring information concerning dealings performance from storage means in which dealings performance on a per-rank basis has been stored;

wherein said allocation decision means decides the allocation based upon the information concerning dealings performance acquired by said dealings-performance acquisition means.

**Claim 19** (Original): The storage medium according to claim 15, wherein said program includes a program for causing the computer to function as:

delivery-schedule acquisition means for acquiring information concerning a delivery schedule of a commodity from storage means in which the delivery schedule has been stored; and

means for deciding a delivery date of a commodity for which an order has been accepted based upon the information concerning the delivery schedule acquired by said delivery-schedule acquisition means.

**Claim 20** (Currently amended): A program for causing a computer to function as the following means in order to assign a rank to an orderer and implement acceptance of an order for a commodity in accordance with the rank:

inventory acquisition means for acquiring information concerning number of units of a commodity in stock from storage means in which number of units of the commodity in stock has been stored upon being allocated to a group corresponding to the rank; and

determination means for determining whether an order can be accepted if the order has been issued;

wherein said determination means determines, ~~on the basis of the information concerning the number of units in stock acquired by said inventory acquisition means, whether the commodity that belongs to the group corresponding to the rank assigned to the orderer and that is capable of satisfying the order issued is in stock, and determines that the issued order is capable of being accepted if it is determined that the commodity is in stock that~~ the issued order is accepted and the number of units of a commodity in stock stored in the storage means is replaced with a number that is difference value between the number of units of a commodity in stock and the number of the issued order if the number of commodity that

belongs to a first group corresponding to a first rank assigned to the orderer is not less than the number of issued order, and

said determination means determines that the issued order is not accepted and determines whether the commodity that belongs to a second group corresponding to a second rank lower than the first rank is in stock without acceptance of an order of the first group if the number of commodity that belongs to the first group corresponding to the first rank assigned to the orderer is less than the number of issued order.